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Man is a social being; he cannot live alone. At the critical moments of his existence he needs the support and involvement of a group. The question arises as to whether it shall be one single group imposed upon him, or whether he shall be able to choose from individual inclinations. This question of unity or uniformity has been answered in American history by a pluralistic society, and it is probable that pluralism will continue to retain its value for a free America in the future. In order to understand the development of the American pluralistic nature, knowledge of American history, of different ethnic groups, of religious ideas, and of minority groups is necessary. American history reveals the immigration of many different ethnic groups to the new world. Migration within the country caused men to draw together in groups according to place of birth and family background, color, and/or religious creed and practices. This grouping served an important function in organizing the complex American society. The three basic religious faiths -- Protestantism or sectarianism, Catholicism, and Judaism -- have served as custodians of tradition and of ethical values. Different minority groups, such as Negroes, Indians and Orientals, lend diversity and enrichment to American culture so that everyone profits from the combined heritages of the population. However, the presence of ethnic groups can also generate prejudice unless every group helps to create the general conditions under which all may thrive.							
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NEGRO HISTORY; OTHER MINORITIES:
TEACHING GUIDES, RESOUCÉ MATERIALS

... Out of Many:

A STUDY GUIDE TO CULTURAL PLURALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

by

OSCAR HANDLIN

Winthrop Professor of History
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A Study Guide to
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Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

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INTRODUCTION

This work aims to provide the student with a useful guide to an important feature of American life. Obviously, it cannot be a complete analysis of the subject. Nor can it hope to include all the factual information that the reader will desire. Rather, it expects to outline, in an understandable fashion, some of the central themes that can then be followed in further reading and discussion. The intention is to stimulate thinking and to raise, not necessarily to answer, questions. The references that follow each section list a selection of the most important available works on the subject in the hope that the guide will serve as a beginning rather than as an end to study.

A NATION OF NEWCOMERS

People in Motion. Americans have much in common—citizenship, a democratic way of life, values that emphasize human dignity, and a concern for the individual personality. But they are also divided by genuine differences. The Texan does not speak quite the same language as the Maine Yankee; Negroes and whites do not look alike; the Baptist does not worship in the same church as the Roman Catholic; and different music may move the grandsons of Italian and German immigrants. Yet they are all equally Americans.

What in the experience of this nation has enabled these heterogeneous people to live harmoniously together, to accept rather than attempt to wipe out the differences among themselves?

A clue to the answer lies in the willingness of Americans to recognize the central fact of their past. They are not all descended from common ancestors; nor have they always been rooted in the places which are now their homes. To some degree they are all immigrants or the offspring of immigrants. And even today, when foreigners no longer cross the borders in former numbers, Americans feel free to move about the vast land they occupy in search of individual advantage.

A Heritage of Diversity. From the start there was space within which many types of men could move about. In the seventeenth century forests, the Indians watched the English come to New England and the Chesapeake colonies; they watched the Dutch

come to New Netherland and the Swedes to the Delaware. As settlement spread, it became more diverse; German and Scotch-Irish farmers advanced toward the frontier; French-Huguenot and Jewish merchants took up trade in the towns; and a growing number of African slaves stocked the expanding plantations. These people could not simply shed the habits and beliefs, the practices and customs nurtured by their diverse origins. What then enabled them to live and work together?

No doubt the emptiness of the land permitted accommodations that reduced frictions. There was room for strangers to settle either in communities of their own or among the earlier arrivals; and no one could deny that the crying need of the country was for men—no matter where they came from. Furthermore, the very fact of migration was a common experience. Though they had departed from many different regions of Europe, all these people knew what it meant to leave home, to risk the hazards of the ocean and the wilderness, and to face the social and psychological problems of an unfamiliar environment. To the extent that those trials influenced their character, they all became Americans.

The independent nation that emerged from the Revolution recognized this situation. It did not make place of birth or descent the test of citizenship. Anyone who wished to do so could participate in the life of the Republic; and any free man could migrate to the United States to enjoy its advantages on terms of complete equality with those already settled. Free institutions and open opportunity, it was confidently believed, would convert people of any background into Americans. That was the heritage of a past which had taught the residents of the New World to live with differences.

The eighteenth-century formula left one exception—the Negro who was not free but a slave. Although, in 1776, most Americans hoped that bondage would ultimately disappear, they could not envisage the terms upon which Blacks and whites would live together. The inability to do so would long remain troublesome. Meanwhile the Constitution attempted to limit the problem by ending the importation of more slaves.

The Great Migrations. The receptive attitude toward newcomers proved enormously stimulating as the United States entered upon the unparalleled territorial and economic expansion of the nine-

teenth century. The promise of freedom, opportunity and equality drew millions of Europeans across the Atlantic to help conquer the vast empty spaces west of the Appalachian mountains, to build great industrial cities and to develop a culture that met the challenge of a rapidly changing world.

Almost immediately after the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, a tide of immigration began to flow toward the New World. It continued almost without interruption for more than a century and brought well above 35,000,000 Europeans to America.

Great social and economic transformations in the Old World cast adrift the population that would pour into the New. Industrialization and the modernization of agriculture broke up traditional households and left no places for thousands of artisans and peasants. The landless poor were crowded out of their villages and were hastened on their way by recurrent famines.

The movement to America came in four great waves. From 1815 to the Civil War, western Europe was the source of most of the newcomers, for England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and southwestern Germany were the first countries to feel the shock of modernization. The volume of the movement mounted steadily from a few thousand a year to a peak of more than 400,000 in 1854. The flow then subsided and was cut off by the Civil War. But by then some 7,375,000 Europeans had come to the United States, in addition to smaller contingents from China and from across the Canadian border.

A second wave took form shortly after the Civil War and continued until about 1890. It included many people from the countries of former migration, but the movement had by now also spread to northern Europe and drew along substantial numbers of Norwegians, Swedes, Danes and Finns. In all, about 8,000,000 persons made the journey in less than three decades.

Migration reached its climax in the years between 1890 and 1924, when more than 20,000,000 new arrivals swelled the population of the United States. The countries of western and northern Europe still contributed to the flow, which however now expanded with additions from the east and the south, where economic and social changes were now also setting millions adrift. Out of the old Austrian empire came aggrieved subject peoples—Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Slovenians, Serbs and Poles. From the territories of

the Russian Czar came other Poles, as well as White Russians, Ukrainians and Ruthenians. Some 2,000,000 East European Jews were swept along in the migration to join co-religionists who had earlier arrived from England, Holland and Germany. Almost 4,000,000 peasants fled from Italy. Portugal added a sizable group; and there was a smaller exodus from Rumania, Greece, Turkey, Albania, and Syria. By 1900, the tendency was world-wide. The United States had become the land of hope also for Mexicans and Canadians, for Japanese, Filipinos, and East Indians. All this while, of course, the native Americans themselves were on a move that subdued the frontier and filled up a continent.

Between 1924 and 1945, the great migrations subsided under the pressures of our own restrictive legislation, of war, of world-wide depression, and of the policies of European totalitarian regimes. Only 200,000 refugees, about half of them Jews, found asylum in the New World. The only important movements then were internal, from South to North, from East to West and from country to city.

The fourth movement which began shortly after 1945 and lasted for about fifteen years differed from its predecessors. It consisted largely of refugees displaced by the war, of skilled technicians needed in the American economy, and of the brides of servicemen who had married overseas. Together these sources produced about 2,000,000 newcomers. They were therefore less important than the internal shifts of population which, in the same years, directed southern Negroes and Puerto Ricans to the industrial cities and pulled millions of other Americans to the Pacific Coast and the Gulf States. That internal reshuffling of population still continues.

Their long history of migration forced Americans to wonder about their own character and identity. Few indeed could take it as a matter of course that they were what they were because they and their parents and grandparents had lived in a fixed place or had inherited a stable culture. What kind of nation was it that remained restlessly in motion? What did nationality mean if it took in people descended from migrants from every part of the world?

The American Identity. Already in the eighteenth century before the Revolution, these problems had begun to elicit discussion. The colonists by then were no longer Englishmen. What were they? Independence lent greater urgency to these questions for it empha-

sized the separateness of the new nation from the former mother country. Down to the middle of the nineteenth century the answer was generally confident. The American was a new type of man, a mixture of all the stocks of the Old World; he would develop, in time, a completely new character shaped by his free environment. Whatever problems existed for the moment could be postponed for the future.

By 1850, however, it was no longer possible to speak in such confident terms. The mixture was not growing more homogeneous; differences persisted. The New England Yankees were by no means becoming more like the Cavaliers in Virginia; Westerners were not similar to either; and the immigration of Irish and Germans had added new ingredients not readily dissolved. As the century advanced and the country expanded, the concern about national character deepened.

By 1900, the explanation of the failure of various groups to fuse into a single type had polarized in two directions. Some Americans continued to believe that their nation was a melting pot which would ultimately create from the ingredients poured into it a single, purer and better stock. But it was necessary more consciously to assimilate the immigrants by teaching them the manners, the habits, the language and the faith of those long established in the land. Others believed that the task was hopeless. The melting pot did not work because the various races were biologically distinct from one another and could not fuse. Therefore it was necessary to exclude all further immigration except that which added strength to the original Anglo-Saxon element.

Neither explanation was satisfactory. The one could not account for the fact that the groups did not dissolve, but retained their identity for generation after generation. The other, by stressing racial homogeneity, denied historical tradition and the actuality of diversity.

Such men as William James, Charles W. Eliot and Randolph Bourne therefore began to question the melting pot concept itself. They saw no value to uniformity as an end in itself and pointed out that the immigrant and other groups could serve the nation most effectively if they retained their identity and enriched the culture of the whole with their own unique contributions. Horace M. Kallen drew an analogy to the orchestra, the instruments of which

did not play in unison, but joined in a general harmony by following each a melodic line appropriate to its own character. American character, from this point of view, was a product of the cultural pluralism of its people.

The concept of cultural pluralism was valuable insofar as it recognized the diversity of the American population and stressed the values of group life. But, as it was formulated fifty years ago, it also raised important questions. Were the groups to which Kallen referred fixed and unchangeable? What would happen to them when they were no longer sustained by immigration? Would intermarriage dissolve them? Could an individual belong to no group, or to more than one? Were all the forces which created these divisions of equal weight; that is, was it the sentimental attachment to the land of his grandparents that made an Irish-American as important as the color that made a Negro? These are still important problems today.

Ethnic Groups and American Freedom. These questions are more comprehensible when viewed in the perspective of American free institutions.

Characteristically, in the United States, men do not turn to government to supply all their social needs. In great areas, they prefer to act voluntarily and cooperatively rather than through the instruments of compulsion controlled by the state. The most important is religion, from which the Constitution altogether separates the government. But the economy, culture, education, philanthropy and family life of the nation offer similar scope for voluntary associations.

Some associations define themselves by function. The medical society includes physicians; the museum enrolls as members all those interested in art; and the Red Cross appeals to the benevolence of all. Others attract only a segment of the whole population; not everyone wishes to join Trinity Church or Temple Emmanuel, the Ancient Order of Hibernians or the Sons of Italy. Some parents wish their children to attend Yeshiva University, others Holy Cross and still others St. Olaf's. Such preferences are largely shaped by values which descend from generation to generation through the family; that is, by ethnic values. Those who adhere to these values and form associations to sustain them behave as ethnic groups.

In our society, migration has generated three kinds of indifference which draw men into such groups. The strangeness that results from a move away from the place of one's birth—or even the memory of an ancestral move—induces Kentucky hillbillies in Chicago or Yankees in California or Italians in New York to act together. Color—particularly when associated with an inferior status—separates Negroes and Indians from others. And diverse creeds and practices keep Catholics and Baptists, Jews and Mormons from worshipping together.

The ethnic group thus serves an important function in organizing a complex society. It enables each individual to find an appropriate affiliation free of interference either from others or from the government. How these groups operate in practice, will emerge more clearly from an examination of those which rest upon the most common difference, that of religion.

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2

RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF CULTURAL PLURALISM

Any listing of churches in the typical American city directory will show how wide are the distinctions generally accepted. Well over 400 distinct religious bodies operate side by side in the United States. However deeply they differ among themselves in articles of faith, they have learned to tolerate each other in daily life. And the ability of their members to work together is an essential part of the social order.

Sectarianism as a Quality of American Protestantism. Toleration, however, was not always a feature of the religious life of the New World. It was not a principle transferred from Europe but a practice that grew out of the conditions of settlement.

Almost all the seventeenth-century newcomers expected to establish churches with close ties to the government and to exclude dissenters. Neither the Puritans of New England nor the Anglicans of the Chesapeake colonies had any intention of encouraging heretics to live in their midst. But controls were too loose to permit any group to maintain its hegemony; Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams who were persecuted in Massachusetts could find refuge in Rhode Island. Furthermore, the demand for population made toleration advantageous. Hands were so short in the wilderness that few could afford to be sticklers about creeds for very long. After 1680 when the new colony of Pennsylvania, established by a Quaker, thrived by openly adopting freedom of worship as a policy, its competition had to follow.

As a result, no denomination had a monopoly of religious life. By the time of the Revolution a multitude of sects were free to follow their own inclinations; and the separation from England strengthened the tendency by dissolving most of the remaining ties between church and state. Thereafter no legal favor put any group at an advantage over the others; each was equally free to take what form it wished.

Some denominations were the products of immigration. The Congregationalist, Anglican and the Dutch Reformed churches thus originated in the Old World. They were later followed by German Lutherans and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. Still later Lutheran Norwegians, Danes, Swedes and Finns insisted on forming their own synods; and the Greeks, Welsh, Russians and Armenians also insisted on transplanting Old Country ways of worship. The Negroes too are mostly communicants of churches of their own.

Other sects arose from frequent schisms that reflected differences of theological opinion, as when the Unitarians divided from the Congregationalists. Still others arose when great social issues divided the people, as when attitudes toward slavery splintered the Methodist and the Baptist churches. Finally, a succession of native prophets attracted significant followings through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—Joseph Smith and the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, Joseph Miller and the Adventists, and Mary Baker Eddy and the Christian Scientists, for example.

The designation Protestant therefore applies to hundreds of different sects. They have in common a vague theological heritage; they are Christian and refuse to accept the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. But on most doctrinal matters, they diverge radically. On the other hand, their ethnic character establishes connections among them. Each individual is, of course, free to worship in the church of his choice. But most remain affiliated with the denomination of their parents; and the Protestants, as a result, have some degree of social unity despite the creedal differences among them.

American Catholicism. Two large religious groups stand apart by virtue both of their faith and their social origins.

Toleration was not readily accorded to the handful of American Catholics in the colonies. In part that was due to lingering suspicions inherited from Reformation England. In part it was due to

fear of the hostile French and Spanish along the borders who seemed to be allied with the Church of Rome. In any case, a group which still accepted the discipline of a foreign potentate then seemed alien. Catholics labored under some disabilities down until after the Revolution and a residual prejudice against them existed until well into the twentieth century; and that itself kept them apart.

Furthermore, the church was largely a product of late immigration. Its greatest period of growth came in the middle of the nineteenth century when it received millions of new Irish and German communicants. Still later, its numbers swelled with the arrival of Italians, Poles, French Canadians, and Mexicans. Immigration which added strength to the Church also made it seem foreign and increased the difficulties of adjustment to the American environment.

The Church, however, was neither as monolithic nor as detached from American life as it seemed to outsiders to be. Its members did not deviate from the central doctrines of the faith. But the Irish, the Italians and the Poles each wished to retain the distinctive features of worship they had known at home. Furthermore, age-old practices did not quite fit the new conditions and led to disputes over such important questions as the role of lay trustees, the control of education and attitudes toward republican institutions.

Americanization involved changes by which the Church accommodated itself to both kinds of problems. It insisted upon retaining its unity; but it permitted national parishes to serve the needs of each group it embraced. In time also it adjusted to its situation as one among many religious bodies that co-exist in a pluralistic society. It therefore became not simply the arm of a foreign body operating in the United States, but an American institution.

Judaism in the New World. The comparable process that transformed Judaism in the New World was modified by its lack of a central source of authority. Each congregation of Jews was completely independent and entirely controlled by its members. Each was free to interpret the tradition of the Torah in its own fashion.

The few thousand Jews in the colonies on the eve of the Revolution were already divided by nationality and by mode of worship; and divisions among those of Spanish, Portuguese, German, English and Polish descent long persisted. Indeed immigration in the nineteenth century introduced even more complexities, as new-

comers arrived from eastern Europe, the Levant and North Africa.

The divisions bred by recollections of place of birth would ultimately subside when immigration ended and left an even larger proportion of Jews native-born. But before that happened other groupings based on religious policy had appeared. A Reform movement sought to reshape Judaism to modern conditions by stressing the ethical rather than the ritual aspects of faith. In reaction the Orthodox insisted on maintaining the traditional law. And a Conservative element took an immediate position, seeking gradual changes under the control of some authoritative body. The result at present is three quite clearly defined sects among American Jews. In addition smaller groups like the Hasidim insist on going their own way; and a large number of Jews remain formally unaffiliated, yet continue to identify themselves either out of loyalty, sentiment or cultural attachments.

Americanizing Tendencies. All the faiths have been subject to the pressure of Americanizing tendencies which have left similar impressions on them. All operate, after all, in the same society and feel the influence of the same environment. Science, the mass media and the educational system subtly created similarities in the patterns of worship, in the round of social activities that center in the church, and in the basic assumptions of the members. There was a tendency in all to expand the role of the laity who increasingly shared the attitudes and views of people in other denominations.

Yet paradoxically, Americanization did not make all the groups alike or destroy their ethnic quality. Not only did diverse traditions retain their strength, but the very conditions of co-existence in a pluralistic society created the assumption that each man would adhere to the faith of his fathers.

Every religion, to some extent, felt a missionary impulse. Each conceived itself as the custodian of the truth and the sole path to salvation; and each wished to spread its gospel as widely as possible. Yet as a practical matter, in the United States, it was impossible to assume that people of other faiths, with whom one lived and did business, whom one elected to office or chose as a doctor, would be damned. Even the most exclusive churches found some way out of the dilemma to spare the heroes of the past and the friends of the present. Furthermore, since these were social as well as religious organizations, there was no urgency to bringing in

great numbers of strangers. "Live and let live" was the preferable formula. Each man was to go to the church of his choice which, it was assumed, would be that in which he was raised. On this basis it became possible for the various denominations to work with, rather than compete with, one another.

The Functions of Faith. The fact that the churches take for granted the common antecedents of their members permits them to serve an important function, in addition to that of divine worship; and conversely that further emphasizes their ethnic character. These bodies are the custodians of tradition and of the sacred objects, rituals and forms of expression which men cherish. When faced with the significant incidents in human life—birth, marriage, and death—people wish to have the emotional assurance of a connection with the ancestral past. At such moments the church and the family converge in an association which cements ethnic loyalties.

Religion too is the custodian of ethical values. In a general sense, Americans share a common moral position derived from their Judeo-Christian heritage. But the practical expression of their ethical impulses through philanthropy still is likely to fall within ethnic and religious lines.

As a consequence, these groupings are likely to retain their identity for a long time. Their deep roots in the past and their functions in the present give them a strong hold on our society. Along with the other kinds of groupings which are the products of migration—those created by color and nativity—they establish pluralistic modes of action as normal in the United States. That is a source of great social strength; and also of serious social strains.

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3

PLURALISTIC GROUP LIFE

Can There Be Minorities without a Majority? Homogeneous societies can readily define a minority. The community to which the majority belongs acts through a government, a church, a school system and an array of philanthropic, cultural and social institutions. The minority stands apart insofar as it does not participate but supports autonomous activities of its own.

In the United States, there is no majority; and, except for the political order which involves every citizen, there is not a single set of institutions of which most people are members. Instead, society consists of a multitude of groupings and associations, which operate on a parity and none of which, therefore, is, properly speaking, a minority. Legally, none has either a privileged or a disadvantaged position, for the law recognizes only individuals whom it aims to treat on the basis of equality.

With one important exception, each person is free to choose his own affiliations. He may change his name or religion, contribute to what charities and join what clubs he likes. He may remain entirely detached if he prefers. Most men do prefer to be members of some group—for simple fellowship and sociability, for mutual assistance, and for cooperation in meeting the cultural and religious needs no individual can satisfy in solitude. Generally, similar people act together in these matters. Therefore the groups to which they belong fall within ethnic lines. But the act of belonging is itself

voluntary. A man can, if he wishes, forget the origins of his ancestors or he can change his faith just as he can move from one section to another. He can be a member of both Jewish and Russian-American or Catholic and Italian associations, for there is no reason why these groupings need be exclusive or make a total demand on his loyalties.

The one exception arises from color. The history of slavery and of contact with the Indians in this country created a special sensitivity to color which is regarded as an indelible sign of the individual's identification. Some people do pass, but the great majority of Negroes, Indians and Orientals lack that choice. Membership in their groups is not merely the result of a voluntary decision; it is thrust upon them by the prejudice of the whole society. What significance that has in the functioning of these ethnic groups will become clearer from a survey of some of the types that operate in American society.

Types of Ethnic Groups. Ethnic groups differ not only in the element that sets them off—whether color, nativity, or religion—but also in other important respects. Their size determines whether they will be able to carry on a round of activities complete enough to satisfy their members. The extent to which the group is concentrated in a single social and economic position and the level of that position influence the regard in which the rest of the society holds it. Most important of all, these groups differ in the degree to which membership is voluntary.

The people of color stand at one extreme. Most of them lack any choice whatever; they are born what they are and can rarely divest themselves of their affiliation. Furthermore, the prejudice of the rest of society stamps them as inferior. Some states forbid miscegenation by law; and almost everywhere discrimination limits these men to restricted residences, occupations and educational opportunities that further bind them to the group. As a result their own loyalties are mixed with resentment. They may be proud of their color, but they cannot help but regard it also as a badge of shame.

Most immigrants are also limited in their choice. The Italian or Puerto Rican who lands in New York, the Mexican who arrives in El Paso or Los Angeles knows that he is different from the natives. He moves into a community of people who speak his own language, stand at his own social level and share his ideas and tastes. The

group is helpful because it provides continuity with his past and aids in the adjustment to the new environment. The exceptional few, who become mobile either through gaining wealth or through talent or education, can leave the group or retain whatever degree of affiliation they desire.

The second generation has more problems. It is born into an immigrant group but is marginal in the sense that it acts both inside and outside the world of its parents. To the extent that its members seek to advance, they often find the old community a handicap and wish to break away. To the extent that they encounter prejudice and are rebuffed they may be driven back into it. An ethnic group of which many members are in this position is often unstable and torn by conflict.

In the third generation and after, these difficulties subside. Such people are more secure, better adjusted, less torn by divided values. Their ethnic associations are reduced to cultural, sentimental or religious bases, compatible with their full participation in the wide opportunities of the whole society. They have great latitude in making choices and fewer conflicts than their parents.

The group which rests entirely upon a religious foundation is the most secure of all, for such differences are universally recognized as valid in the United States and indeed are protected by constitutional guarantees.

Prejudice thus has an important effect upon the health of ethnic groups. The hostility of the outer society strengthens rather than weakens affiliations, but it does so by restricting the choices of the members. It thereby emphasizes the negative rather than the positive aspects of belonging. The victims of prejudice come to regard their group as a prison that curtails their freedom rather than a means of serving their individual needs.

The Values of Difference. The effects of prejudice are unfortunate because they obscure the means through which the group can assist the individual in adjusting to the mass society in which we live. We have moved beyond the point in which the community consists entirely of similar people, all known to one another. More than 200,000,000 Americans are bound together by the ties of a highly complex industrial society. No man can remain alone or stay put in the same place or avoid frequent contact with strangers. Yet the necessity of frequent moves, of continual exposure to un-

known faces and to unfamiliar ways, puts a great strain on the individual.

When it is voluntary, the ethnic group can act as a buffer between the lonely man and the whole society. It provides him with a meaningful round of activities among people he knows; it supplies him with continuity to his personal past; it strengthens his family life; and it helps him understand himself and his problems.

The ethnic group also contributes to the welfare of the whole society. It lends diversity to, and thus enriches, our culture so that all of us can profit from the combined heritages of the various strands of our population. Even more important, by relieving individual tensions, it contributes to the welfare of the whole society. People who enjoy a sound group life are not as likely as others to become disorganized or to find themselves dependents or social problems.

The Problems of Co-Existence. It is no easy task to achieve harmony among so many diverse groups; and in the past Americans have not always been able to avoid bitter conflicts. Sometimes contact has led to competition rather than cooperation; at other times the very desire to strengthen the group has tended to injure those not in it. In a free society it is necessary to be vigilant in the watch for such potential sources of dissension.

Since all groups co-exist in the same society, the contacts among them are always in danger of deterioration. Each seeks to develop its own leaders, but must be careful lest it become the tool of personal ambition. The appearance of a machine or the impression of bloc voting creates resentment because the group then seems to put its own narrow interests above those of the whole community. Different views about such issues as birth control or prohibition also generate hard feelings out of the suspicion that one element is trying to impose its philosophy of life on the whole population. There are times when economic and ethnic problems intermesh to produce a combustible situation, as they did in the case of slavery or in the case of the relations of capital and labor early in this century. Even foreign policy can lead to bitterness as when sympathies were divided over American attitudes toward the war between 1914 and 1917, or over the isolationism of the 1930's.

More subtle pressures also create difficulties which may smolder for a long time before they erupt into conflict. Each group develops

institutions and habits of action which add to its comfort. It then becomes anxious to maintain its strength by holding the loyalty of its own members, by keeping the next generation within the fold, and by excluding outsiders. All these tendencies imperceptibly generate prejudice against those who do not belong. It is quite natural that similar people should wish to live together, that friends should favor one another on the job or in business, and that parents should wish to see their children marry within the group. In each case, however, there is but a short step between those desires and the restrictive residential covenant, discrimination in employment, and the belief that various racial stocks are biologically divided from one another. It is not a necessary step, but care is needed to avoid it, for prejudice is a disease to which a pluralistic society is always exposed.

We can guard against such ill effects by remembering that a community which consists of a multitude of groups can only operate effectively when the members of all of them are treated equally. No group in the long run can protect itself by its own efforts; it will only be safe if it helps to create the general conditions under which all will thrive. And no group justifies itself as an end in itself, but only to the extent that it furthers the interests of its individual members and of the whole society.

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4

UNITY OR UNIFORMITY: THE CHOICE FOR AMERICANS

Is it worthwhile to be different? This is a question Americans are sometimes tempted to ask. Would not our major problems dissolve if we could wash away the vestiges of the past and arrive at a situation in which we shared the same beliefs and practices, even looked alike in outward appearance? Then we could escape all the difficulties created by prejudice and discrimination and avoid all necessity for choice.

Some forces in our society do operate in that direction. Mass production and mass communication impose similarities upon us all. Millions of people all over the country watch the same television program or read the same magazine and learn to talk and think alike. The same media shape their behavior and the economy supplies them with the ready-made clothes and homes that impose an almost identical appearance on them all. But not quite. We are still far from the mass society that some observers think they have made out. But this certainly is one of the most powerful tendencies in our lives. Is it altogether good?

This is a part of the price we pay for the relative abundance we enjoy. It is better to have discount-house suits and shoes than not to have any at all. But we must limit the cost and to do so we must take account of what might be lost if we were to go all the way to uniformity.

What would it be like if everyone were just an American, pure and simple, nothing else? It would mean that each individual

would have only one role in society, that of the citizen, and would belong to only one organization, the state. All would then be equal and alike.

All the intermediate organizations in society would disappear. For if there were no important differences, there would be no need for separate churches, hospitals, philanthropic associations and cultural institutions. The individual would become an atom, isolated among millions of others, with but one loyalty — to the government.

We have encountered such people before and know that they were unhappy in their loneliness. When the depression of the 1930's dislodged millions of Americans from their accustomed moorings, they sought an alternative mode of belonging. They provided attentive audiences for the demagogues who then tried to lure them into silver-shirted and other fascist organizations. Earlier social dislocations had produced the membership of the Ku Klux Klan and its counterparts which fed off the eagerness of men without connections to be part of something meaningful. In the United States, such movements flowered but briefly before they withered away; a pluralistic society proved unfertile soil for them. But the fact that other, more homogeneous cultures did offer the ground on which totalitarian tendencies could thrive should alert us to the importance of the saving element in our own situation.

Man is a social being. He cannot live alone. At all the critical moments of his existence he needs the support and involvement of a group. The question is whether it shall be one single overarching group imposed on him or whether he shall be able to choose from among a variety that which best comports with his individual inclinations. In the past, the diverse heritage of the Americans gave a pluralistic answer to that question with consequences reflected in our whole way of life. And whatever we can discern of the future that lies before us would indicate that pluralism retains its value for a people who still wish to be free.

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